

# Cultural Connection

An Update on Cultural Competency

Volume V, Number 6

Spring 2001

## February is Black History Month

Carter G. Woodson, known as the “Father of Black History” was born in 1875 to parents who had been slaves. He had to work to contribute to the family livelihood and thus started school much later than other children. His motto was “It’s never too late to learn.” He went on to become a high school teacher, but was always bothered by the lack of curriculum in any educational institution on the history of Black Americans. So in 1915 he started the American Negro Academy to study the accomplishments of Black people. On February 19, 1926, he established “Negro History Week.” In 1976 the now renamed Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History changed the celebration from a week to a month, changing the name to Black History Month, which is celebrated in February to mark the births of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. ■



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# The Red Road To Recovery Is Spiritual

By Martha J. Murphy

The alcoholism and drug addiction rate among indigenous peoples of the world is much higher than other populations and cause for great concern and searching on the part of ethnic elders and professionals.

Traditional medical and social model treatment programs have spiritual components as enhancements and in some cases as major supports for patients and clients during treatment for substance abuse. But programs that serve indigenous peoples in the Americas are looking to reawakening the spiritual traditions of their elders to promote and sustain recovery of individuals as a people. In searching for causes of the high rate of substance abuse among native peoples, diet, diabetes, heredity, and genetic predisposition have all been identified. However, it has been the rekindling of ancient native spiritual pathways, so long denied American Indians, that has gleaned a substantial success rate in terms of recovery.

The Four Worlds International Institute for Human and Community Development in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, is a holistic education and development project serving North American Native Communities to achieve the goal of elimination of alcohol and drug abuse at a community-wide level. Phil Lane, Ph.D., director of the progressive project, defines this project as the Native American Sobriety Movement that is a vital social movement that combines ancient spiritual traditions with modern medical approaches to substance abuse and recovery.

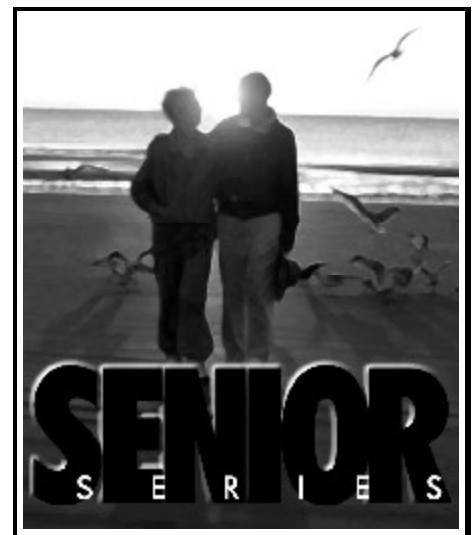
According to Dr. Lane of the Salish Tribe, "It takes responsibility of the recovery process to the community level. Native peoples who have been forbidden to practice their traditions, language and spiritual pathways, are extremely susceptible to alcoholism and drug addiction. They have lost their rights of passage and their context of themselves in relationship to family, community and to the universe when their spiritual traditions, language and family have been taken away. "Booze and drugs take the place of this spiritual pathway," says Dr. Lane.

The Four Worlds project is a working program that emphasizes the importance of tribal values, spiritual awareness, community development and ethnic preservation in the recovery process. For instance, the Red Road to Sobriety utilizes the native tradition of the talking circle, in place of group therapy or 12-step meetings, in which an eagle feather is passed from one participant to another as each shares thoughts and feelings with the group. Educational programs in schools teach native traditions, respect for teachings of the elders, self-exploration and development, directing themselves and others on the path to positive development, strategies for understanding and appreciation of the human family and developing healthy communities.

Not unlike the African tradition of "It takes an entire village to raise a child," the Native American communities of Canada and in the U.S. are making encouraging progress in the eradication of substance abuse through reclaiming their culture, their traditions and their spirituality.

For mainstream Americans, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous fills this cultural, spiritual and family gap that seems present in the lives of victims of substance abuse. These 12-step programs provide a practical and spiritual pathway as well as an understanding and supportive family that their individual American cultural experiences did not provide. In reference to the absence of a cultural or spiritual pathway or the "God Hole," all individuals dealing with substance abuse issues in cultural communities will agree that while the physical illness of addiction and substance abuse seems reason enough to seek treatment, nothing can quite describe the heaviness and emptiness of the "spiritual bottom" — of being lost in your own country without a cultural or spiritual path to follow.

According to Dr. Lane, "Perhaps we all need a tribe, traditions, a ritual and a spiritual pathway to heal our communities, to be



## FAQ's about aging: Part V

### Statement 1:

*Death from stroke and heart disease are declining.*

True. Fewer men and women are dying of stroke or heart disease.

### Statement 2:

*Older people on the average take more medications than younger people.*

True. The elderly consume 25 percent of all medications and, as a result, have many more problems with adverse drug reactions

### Statement 3:

*Snake oil salesmen are as common today as they were on the frontier.*

True. Medical quackery is a \$10 billion business in the United States. People of all ages are commonly duped into "quick cures" for aging, arthritis, and cancer.

productive and responsible human beings and to lead fulfilled lives." ■

(Author Martha J. Murphy writes about health care issues for medical and professional journals. Published with permission of Recovery Update—All Rights Reserved.)

## I Bend

*By Johanna Batzion Spektor*

I am a dozen pieces, all of which my birthing bore  
I am woman biological, a daughter, a sister, more  
The mother who reared me told me young that I was birthwrit Jew before  
my other mother gave me up, and she would say, "Your father was a  
Black man, Johanna."  
As if it's something to adore.

Not an ego's take, for the child who has so much at stake  
No giving tender heed, only denial; and proceed.  
and so at first we all will read, Don't you mother adore!  
and further in rushed and hushed I speak, but Black's not really a part of me  
for I wanted the white much more.

So I make myself quite clear, that the reason I stand here, is to face  
that which I fear.  
And past...I fell to shame, and I'm ashamed to say, that the Black in me  
has been kept so far deep among my fray  
but not today.

The worst lesson in my youthful mold, was the teacher who taught that,  
"two halves make one, whole."  
So was I to understand that, though the owner I may be, my soul and  
self don't count as much, as mother, father, equals ME.  
Was it wrong in lacking base for fear myself could easily slide to think,  
"If to confine is safe, when I'm defined, it's the Black I'll choose to hide.  
A process longer than a seedling's sprout, this cunning I'm to end  
it all began with this," I don't deny who I am, I merely bend.

I bend my lips inward to hide the curse of full and lusciously, when pursed  
I felt as hating half myself, turn in thin lips, that's me

I bend my hair day out with heat as if to burn away the curl, after all it  
doesn't suit me, not the least for this girl.

I bend my voice reflecting who I wish you all to think my hue, keeping  
clear of lines in diction  
whenever comes my cue.

I bent so much my sister soul began to ache, don't you know a tree with  
no strong roots can bend so much before it breaks.  
So out my branches grew, reaching far for answer sake  
How too did Proud Black bend, when they had everything at stake?  
Their origins stripped bare of truth and fact  
The Proud did bend a 1000 times when the whip was at the crack.

Deep cavity filled with Roxy, no love there just bastard freak  
keep still Proud Black, work soul, love hard, and keep quick about your feet  
Now, I don't dare compare my bend to theirs, but bending big or small  
lends a harder earth to break your back when you do, and you do, you fall.

But now today I bend with flowers sway, I've no time to pass, so I cut away the fray  
exaggerate my flesh and fold this chance to be free today -

Before you is a tree whose stance  
Now bends the other way.

# Calendar of Events

Exhibit	February 1 & 22, 2001 <i>African Cultural Arts Council</i> Location: Bowers Museum	Information: 714-543-7379
Event	February 3, 2001 <i>Black History Parade and Cultural Faire</i> Location: Santa Ana	Information: 714-440-8943 (Chuck Mosley)
Exhibit	February 3 - 29, 2001 <i>Black History Month Celebrations</i> Location: Elite Beauty Supplies & Santa Ana Main Post Office	Information: 714-972-2190 (Ernesta Wright & James Jefferson respectively)
Event	February 11, 2001 <i>Jewish Community Forum: Oneness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</i> Location: Chapman University	Information: 714-538-0404
Event	February 24, 2001 <i>NAACP Orange County Citizens of Distinction Awards Dinner</i>	Information: 714-972-2190
Exhibit	February 25, 2001 <i>Chinese Glass Art</i> Location: Bowers Museum Information: 714-567-3649	
Event	February 27, March 1 & April 25, 2001 <i>Technowomen From the Moon: An Inside Job</i> Location: CalState Long Beach	Information: 562-985-4546
Conference	March 5, 2001 <i>2nd Annual Multicultural Conference "Towards An Inclusive Multicultural Agenda"</i> Location: Hyatt Regency Irvine Times: 7 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (CEUs will be available)	Information: Cultural Competency 714-796-0188 or 714-834-6237
Event	March 26, 2001 <i>Celebrating César Chávez</i> Location: Bowers Museum	Information: 714-567-3679
Event	March 2001 <i>African American Health Awareness New Millennium Community Coalition</i> Location: TBA	Information: NMCC3@yahoo.com
Event	April 17, 2001 <i>Sexuality Harassment</i> Location: UC Irvine	Information: 949-824-7372



# Spotlight on Excellence Award

## January Nominee

Jose Luis Valle-Ochoa  
Mental Health Specialist  
Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services

Jose Luis Valle-Ochoa began his career with the Health Care Agency in 1991. He served as a Community Worker for Alcohol Services at a time when he was the only bilingual staff. Since then he has moved to Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services where he currently works as a Mental Health Specialist.

Jose immigrated to the United States in 1986 from Mexico City, where he worked as an elementary school teacher. He is currently attending Irvine Valley College and hopes to become a social worker.

"Jose is caring and compassionate," states his colleague Dr. Ellie Karimi, "I have never met a clinician who cares so much about the quality of care for consumers." Jose works with all consumer ethnic groups, giving all the same level of commitment to service.

He helps to educate his fellow clinicians at his clinic on Mexican culture, and has provided a great deal of assistance in translating clinic forms into Spanish.

As his colleagues put it, Jose is the most decent, honest and sincere person who cares not only for his clients and his community, but also for his co-workers." ■



From left to right: Veronica Kelley, Doug Barton, Jose Luis Valle-Ochoa, MHS, from Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services, and Rafael Canul.

# Spotlight on Excellence

## February Nominee

Alec R. Esparza, Project Specialist  
Orange County Department of Education  
PALS Peer Assistance Leadership Program

Alec Esparza has a wonderful heritage. He is Inde-tineh (Apache), Mexican, and Irish. César Chavez once said; "One of the greatest acts of courage and heroism that an individual can display, is extending their hands to help another." Alec will tell you growing up in East Los Angeles, that hands

were used in many ways and not very often in peaceful ways. He contributes his success in life to the people that took the time to extend him a hand. These individuals made a life-changing impact on him and opened doors to possibilities. He will also tell you that today the work he is doing is due to those people who took the time to understand and accept him. They showed him that people could create a wonderful environment for harmony, respect, and safety.

At the age of 17, Alec learned about being in service to others. He worked with children playing sports in the inner city



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# Spotlight on Excellence

parks. At this early age, he learned about competition and rivalry. That conflicts can arise easily, that people get angry, they often come out not to win the game but to hold onto turf issues. In 1978, he worked as a campus supervisor and certified athletic trainer working with high school students at the Monrovia High School. Alec was not just working with students concerning sports, but often as a peacemaker. He would meet with parents of students that he coached. He would do home visits for those students with problems and encourage them to stay in school, to develop character, responsibility and accountability. It was at Monrovia High School that Alec began working with racial tensions between groups and facilitating, caucusing and mediation. He was also a mentor for the MECHA Program and worked with the Black Student Union.

In 1989, Alec began working for the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) with the Operation Safe Schools Program and a few years later with the PAL Peer Assistance Leadership Program. Again he was working in the schools with individuals and groups on racial tensions and issues of diversity. Part of his job is developing strategies to bring students together in a safe environment and to help others to see individuals through a lens of acceptance, trust and unity. In the early 90's, he developed and deepened his skills in mediation, conflict management, resolution, and cultural awareness through professional development workshops and conferences. He uses all of these skills in his work with Orange County students.

Alec facilitates workshops and is a speaker at conferences, such as; California Activities Director Association, Orange County Human Relations Commission's "Walk In My Shoes" Conference; California Association of Peer Programs; California Association of Student Councils; and Orange County Head Start. He has also served on the Office of Criminal Justice Planning's 1990-91

Youth Violence Prevention Conference. All of his work with students, parents and the community involves cultural awareness, diversity, choices and consequences, and school safety. Alec works daily with students and teachers in the PAL Program facilitating small groups and conducting assemblies. As a PAL staff member he attends PAL Camps working with elementary, intermediate and high school students. Alec uses a favorite method to help get across a message to students story telling, a technique learned from his family members and elders.

Dr. Bill Beacham, Executive Director for the Center for Drug-Free Communities, said, "Alec Esparza is one of those rare individuals who doesn't treat prejudice as 'just' an intellectual problem. His focus is on changing people through emotional channels utilizing his non-threatening demeanor,

Socratic dialogue, experiential learning, humor, and his wonderful sense of storytelling. Involvement, empowerment, compassion and empathy are his conducts to enlighten us as to how prejudice and discrimination hurts 'all of us.' Alec elevates us all."

Alec will tell you that cultural awareness is always evolving. The challenge is, to prepare ourselves for the future. Embrace diversity, be aware of the social and cultural climate and respond to it in an enlightened and respectful way.

## Going away thought:

One of the most difficult journeys we make daily as individuals is the journey from the heart to the mind. To be a powerful influence as a positive leader one must make the journey from the mind to the heart... and often." *Anonymous* ■

## SPOTLIGHT ON EXCELLENCE

Do you work with someone who exemplifies Cultural Competency? Someone who is both sensitive and respectful to persons of all cultures, whether colleague or consumer? If so, the Cultural Competency Department would like to formally acknowledge these individuals.

Please fill out the necessary information and pony it back to us and we'll make sure this employee or consumer gets acknowledged in our next newsletter. Our pony address is 38-P.

Awardees will be honored at the County's Mental Health Advisory Board Meeting.

Thank you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Work address/ Pony address \_\_\_\_\_

Discipline \_\_\_\_\_

Why you believe he/she is Culturally Competent: \_\_\_\_\_

Example of dedication to Cultural Competency: \_\_\_\_\_

## Letters to the Editor

# (re: "Reverse Discrimination??" Winter 2000)

"The Juvenile Hall's largest group of minors is now the Latinos." This statement is disturbing. It's even more disturbing that some individuals seem to think that these statistics give the Latino youth the power to "reversely discriminate." The Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. Does that mean that we now have the power to discriminate? We are still among the ethnic minorities with the lowest level of education, poverty is a historical trend in our community, we are over represented in the amount of cases diagnosed with AIDS/HIV, and last but not least, we represent the majority in the prison system besides African-Americans. Although ethnic minorities are growing in numbers, political and educational decisions that affect these groups continue to be made by White male individuals... When members of my family are not pulled over by the police for their "suspicious" looks, or when members of my community are not over represented in the prison system but in positions of political and educational power, maybe then I will agree with you in that we, Latinos now have the power to engage in "reverse discrimination."

Consuelo Ramirez  
Community Mental  
Health Worker

Where is the reverse discrimination? Has Mr. Gonzalez ever questioned why Juvenile Hall's majority of juveniles are Latinos? I am not shocked by the letter but instead I am disappointed and feel sad to hear the demeaning words about Latinos. I have worked hard at advocating for the Latino community. I have spent hours/days offering support for families, assistance with translation, and have provided education for Latinos who have limited resources and they are constantly discriminated against throughout the system. ...

We often hear time and time again about the large number of Latino youth in Juvenile Hall but no one seems to question why the numbers are so high, instead they are quick to judge, blame and accuse Latinos of reverse discrimination. It is a fact that Latino families lack the education, support, resources, and knowledge about the legal system and their rights.

...As psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, we have chosen to enter into a field of helping. Some of us choose to advocate, some provide therapy, others education and medication but we in some way have made a commitment to help... In response to this article on reverse discrimination, I invite you to take a closer look at the system and to help find a solution to decreasing the number of Latinos in Juvenile Hall. I am offended that Latinos are being labeled 'abusers.' I do not see any reverse discrimination but I do see a need to provide more quality treatment, parent education, support, and information on the legal system. I would strongly encourage you to question whether you are ready to be part of the solution or part of the problem. You made the following statements "Their (Latinos) misplaced anger has begun to create a movement of which I wish to be not part of." For the sake of the Latino community, please get out and allow others to contribute to a solution. Granted there is good and bad in all cultures, it is dangerous to make generalizations about all Latinos being abusive. Your words are those coming from someone who is embarrassed of and angry with Latinos and as a result of these strong feelings, I would strongly recommend you consider working in a different environment where you can relearn to appreciate the beauty and richness of the Latino community and people.

C.R.  
Community Mental  
Health Professional

"I do not see any reverse discrimination, but I do see a need to provide more quality treatment, parent education, support, and information on the legal system."



COUNTY OF ORANGE • HEALTH CARE AGENCY

Cultural Connection

Join Us for Cultural Competency

The Cultural Connection is published quarterly by the Cultural Competency Program of the County of Orange/Health Care Agency. If you would like to contribute an article, or have comments, ideas, or suggestions for newsletter improvement, please write to us at:

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